

WHITBREAD'S TONIC IN SECOND STEP TOWARDS WEMBLEY

RUNCORN 2 WYCOMBE WANDERERS 1
(half time 0-1)

In placing their feet in the third step of the Football Association Trophy competition ladder, Runcorn contributing the lion's share of a most entertaining cup match, once again set their sights on the Wembley Stadium. This time the final will be played on Saturday, May 14th (reports OBSERVER).

A long trip

Runcorn have been drawn away to Dagenham or Yeovil Town in round three which takes place on Saturday, February 26th.

Dagenham (Isthmian League) and Yeovil drew one all in Saturday's game. Dagenham finished third in the league (Wycombe Wanderers were second last season, while Yeovil, members of the Premier Section of the Southern League were last season's runners-up).

Whoever wins the replay Runcorn have a long trip. Dagenham now forms part of the Greater London borough of Barking, while Yeovil is in Somerset.

All the more credit to Alan King and Company in coming back into the game with a devastating second half effort during which the Wanderers of F.A. Challenge cup fame, became a well beaten force.

A goal down within three minutes of the 3 o'clock kick off, failed to un-nerve the Linnetts. And even that missed penalty by Barry Howard almost on the stroke of the interval, didn't affect the ultimate winners' composure.

That undaunted spirit was revealed in bold relief just 90 seconds after the change-round when BARRY WHITBREAD beat the powerfully built John Maskell with a well placed drive.

It was to Whitbread's lasting credit that he should forget his first half miss. Then he failed to take the fullest advantage of an off the upright re-bound caused by Jim O'Connor's super drive.

FORTUNATE

Whitbread, on this occasion, appeared to be trying to place the ball beyond the reach of Maskell who seemed to be "all arms and legs" as he saved somewhat for-

tunately what would have been an equaliser.

Earlier in the initial period, Steve Hipwell might have earned himself a place on the score sheet had he lunged forward to Whitbread's short, but accurate cross.

The ball needed just a slight touch to pass over the goal-line. The keeper was in no position at all to save. It was a split-second situation and the ball shot forward towards the side-line.

So after the shock of that Mike HOLIFIELD goal he collected the re-bound from Mal Bailey's foot to roll the ball past Mal Rawlinson — Runcorn caused the Wanderers defence quite a number of problems.

WORRIED

Trevor Finnigan, Barry Howard, and of course, Whitbread, worried the Wycombe defence. A Finnigan effort looked as if it was certain to enter the net, yet Alan Phillips intervened and headed the ball over the bar. It was indeed one of the best saves by a defender seen on the ground for a considerable time.

Whether skill or luck was on Phillips' side is merely a conjecture. It was a dramatic incident and immediately Maskell grabbed the centre half to bestow on him congratulations for a dramatic save.

The preceding half-a-dozen paragraphs have dealt with the first-half when Wycombe displayed their best form and appeared to be mastering the heavy conditions.

And during the first 45 minutes when most of the Wanderers skills were shown from Peter Cruise, the bearded captain Keith Mead, Ian Pearson, and Howard Kettleborough, King had received a booking, after being spoken to previously.

FIRM CONTROL

Here I should say that Alan Seville of Birmingham, who arrived at Canal Street, three hours before the kick off and made a careful examination of the pitch, controlled the keenly fought cup tie, very firmly.

If there were stages in the first half when Wanderers were apparently mastering the conditions, and might hang onto their slight lead, the second period belonged to Runcorn.

They were far more aggressive as attackers moved up in a threatening manner, and the pressure was taking a noticeable toll on the visiting outfit's stamina.

RUNCORN ROAR

The quick Whitbread equaliser inspired Runcorn, and yet with their all out efforts it wasn't until the 62nd minute that a real Run-

F. A. Trophy

Second Round

At Canal Street

Saturday, February 5th

Weather fine; pitch heavy.

Runcorn: Rawlinson, Rutter, Murphy, Bailey, Duff, King (capt), O'Connor, Hipwell, Whitbread, Finnigan, Howard, sub. Spencer.

Wycombe Wanderers: Maskell, Birdseye, Davies, Mead (capt), Phillips, Priestley, Kennedy, Cruise, Kettleborough, (Fraser), Pearson, Holfield.

Attendance: 1,880.

Referee: A. Seville (Birmingham). Linesmen: G. L. Wilkes (Stoke on Trent), L. J. Kelly (St. Helens).

corn roar was heard. WHITBREAD did the trick.

There had been visions before that winner, of a tedious Tuesday trip to Buckinghamshire for the replay.

But once Runcorn had gained the lead for the very first time, there were only occasional danger signals.

King had sent in a real screamer (a shot which Maskell covered but couldn't hold, Whitbread showing keen anticipation as well as opportunism knocked the ball into the net to be showered with compliments by colleagues and young fans.

PENALTY?

Wycombe seemed aggrieved when they claimed that Peter Duff had handled in the area. There were vigorous protests to the referee, and the hefty linesman G. L. Wilkes, but a free kick was given a yard outside the penalty area.

Except for occasional Wycombe threats, the now confident Runcorn defence held a firm grip, and Rawlinson was cheered as he tipped a skilful header by Phillips over the bar.

Census of opinion in the Wycombe camp was that the better team had won, while Manager Stan Storton, said: "we could have won by a bigger margin if all our chances had been taken."

Runcorn record

August 1976	
21 Macclesfield (a).....	2-3
24 Bolton (h).....	1-2
(N.P.L. Shield final)	
28 Matlock (h).....	0-2
30 Wigan (a).....	0-0

September	
4 Morecambe (a).....	1-1
7 Barrow (a).....	1-0
11 Workson (h).....	0-1
14 Bangor (h).....	0-0
18 Preston (a).....	1-0
(FA Cup, qual. round)	
21 Netherfield (a).....	2-2
25 Burton (a).....	0-0
28 Wigan (h).....	1-1

October	
2 Wigan (a).....	1-2
(N.P.L. Challenge Cup)	
5 St. Helens (a).....	4-0
9 Walsley (a).....	0-1
(FA Cup, qual. round)	
12 Barrow (h).....	1-2
16 Workson (a).....	0-1
20 Bangor (a).....	0-0
23 Gainsborough (h).....	2-1

26 St. Helens (h).....	2-0
30 Stafford (a).....	0-2

November	
6 Macclesfield (h).....	4-0
9 Walsley (a).....	1-0
(Champ. Cup 1st leg)	
13 Frickley (a).....	2-0
20 Frickley (h).....	4-0
23 St. Helens (h).....	2-0
27 Gillingham (a).....	1-2
30 Walsley (h).....	1-3
(Champ. Cup, 2nd leg)	

December	
7 Morecambe (h).....	6-2
(N.P.L. Cup, 3rd round)	
14 Scarborough (a).....	1-1

January 1977	
8 Gateshead (a).....	0-1
10 Northwich (a).....	3-1
18 S. L'pool (a).....	6-2
(FA Trophy, round one)	
22 Altrincham (a).....	3-2
(CSC, round one)	
25 Bolton (h).....	1-1
29 St. Helens (a).....	2-2

February 1977	
(FA Trophy 2nd round)	
5 Wycombe (h).....	2-1